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India

Oppose the Continual Harassment of Rohit Prajapati

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Comrade Rohit Prajapati, member of Radical Socialist, and veteran trade unionist and environmental activist, associated with Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti (Environmental organisation), Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, Jyoti Karmachari Mandal and Vadodara Kamdar Union (independent trade unions), and Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti, as well as connected intimately to the anti-fascist militants of Gujarat from before the 2002 pogroms, has been under various kinds of political harassment, both from the Narendra Modi government, and from the big business companies that have been making huge profits under Modi's regime.

Comrade Rohit was marked out when he, identified by the police as a Hindu, stayed in the predominantly Muslim inhabited Tandalja area in 2002. He was further identified for his role during the pogroms, and for his subsequent role. Comrade Rohit also had been arrested for participating in the struggles over the Narmada dam.

In the last two decades and more, he and his comrades, in trade unions, in the environmentalist organisations, have been fighting to link environmental issues and the rights of workers, poor peasants, adivasis. This has led to militant battles, court cases, and other forms of struggles. The issues include the struggle against inadequate protection for workers and local communities when hexavalent chromium is used, the struggle to get minimum wages for chemical industry workers, the struggle to keep Vapi, Ankleswar, Vadodara and Vatva industrial areas and the residential areas of workers and other common people cleaned up.

As a result, the Modi government had installed a surveillance programme, and police personnel were constantly coming to his home and asking questions for a whole year, even though no case had been filed. At the same time, the exposures of environmental pollution and the impact on health of workers and community dwellers in Vapi, Ankleswar, Vadodara and Vatva etc also got industrialists angry. They are aware that because of the struggles by trade unionists and environmental activists, Hema Chemicals has been put under restraint by the Supreme Court of India. In order to try and forestall such actions against them, the Vapi industrialists have filed two cases against comrade Rohit. Both are over the reports, based on his arguments, that Vapi is the most polluted town in the country. The first is a civil defamation suit for Rs. 25 Crores (approximately 4.2 million US dollars), while the latest is a Criminal Defamation suit under clauses of the Indian Penal Code that can lead to two years imprisonment.

Radical Socialist expresses the view that this is nothing more or less than another tactical move in an ongoing class struggle, which however is of great importance. Gujarat is not only the place that had a massive pogrom. Gujarat is also the development model that the fascists of the RSS-BJP want to highlight as the model for the whole of India. The struggles of comrades formerly in the Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, and now in Radical Socialist, along with their allies in trade unions, civil rights organisations, and environmentalist organisations, show up constantly that this model has devastating consequences for the working class and all other toilers. The Narmada waters go, not to the dry areas of Gujarat, as rhetorically promised before the dam was built, but to beautify the Ahmedabad waterfront. The industrial growth of Gujarat is based on repeated attempts to flout Pollution Control Board norms. Not merely by low wages, but also by physically killing the workers through pollution are these industrialists making fast profits and thus is Modi showcasing to the world his model Gujarat.

We call upon all working class, environmentalist, and socialist organisations, and all organisations concerned in any way with the rights of humans, to support these struggles. In this context, we urge the formation of a broad defence committee, that will look not only at the cases against Comrade Rohit, but also seek to support the work being done by the JKM, the VKU and the PSS about industry, workers rights and pollution. [1]

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24/06/2013

[1] You can see the note circulated by Comrade Rohit and Comrade Trupti Shah at <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spi...>